

ORAL HISTORY

of

PHYLLIS FOLEY

Interviewer:

Lucy Kendall

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Interview History

Copy of Phyllis Foley's campaign literature

Transcript

California Historical Society
Women in California Collection

Interview History

Oral History of PHYLLIS FOLEY (Mrs. Gilliam)
Born: September 18, 1922
Now living at her home in Belmont, California

Interviews held on:

March 5, 1979
April 5, 1979
July 25, 1979

Time of Interviews: Approximately three hours

The following interview is to be read in conjunction with the interview held with Ms. Foley's mother, BERTHA METRO, early this year. When Ms. Metro was interviewed her memory and her health were rapidly deteriorating. The interview was not concluded and gives a very inadequate picture of what was a full and active life in behalf of her union constituency, Local #283 of the Hotel & Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union.

Because of this lack, Ms. Foley consented to be interviewed on her own life, her memories of her mother, and her continuation of her mother's stewardship of the Local to which Ms. Foley was elected Secretary-Treasurer in 1974, the position previously held by her mother.

Conduct of the Interview

Extensive preparation had been made for the interview with Ms. Metro, and some of this background material was called upon in the present interview.

The union to which Ms. Foley belongs, and of which the interviewer is also a member, was (and is) in the throes of bitter factional struggles. Immediately after Ms. Foley's election to Secretary-Treasurership of Local #283 the six culinary unions in San Francisco were merged on the basis of an International policy decision. The locals were not consulted and had no vote. Therefore the opinion of the membership is nether known nor recorded.

The officers of the amalgamated locals continued in the leadership of the newly formed Local #2 with Ms. Foley becoming Secretary-Treasurer of the new Local. After a period of several years a hectic election was held. Ms. Foley ran for office with a group of incumbent officers against a "rank and file" slate, and was re-elected (one of the few who maintained their offices) - the balance of full time officers being replaced by what was called a "dissident" group. Ms. Foley

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cooperated with the newly elected officers. Her basis, she told me, was that they were all elected by the membership and full cooperation was necessary for the good of the union. Ms. Foley was accused of "going over to the enemy" by her former co-workers. Factional struggles continued. The union was finally placed in Trusteeship by the International President. This trusteeship was challenged in court and a decision reached that another election should be held under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Just prior to this second election Bertha Metro died after a brief period of hospitalization.

Ms. Foley ran for office of Secretary-Treasurer as an independent, did little campaigning, and lost to a member of a slate.

The interview was conducted under these trying circumstances. The Interviewer, more interested in the background of women's problems, of Mrs. Metro's thinking during the thirties, and in Ms. Foley's personal reactions and experiences, did not wish to get involved in current union history although it is naturally touched on in the course of the interview.

The Interviewee

I first met Ms. Foley when I went to see her to ask about interviewing her mother. She is a tall, handsome, placid seeming woman whose looks are deceiving. Quoting Dorothy Parker, I believe "she has a whim of iron." She is courteous, cooperative, and despite all her problems fitted in two hours for me prior to the election and one hour following her defeat. The first two meetings were in the very early hours of the morning at her office, and the last interview held at my home in San Francisco. Although living in the shadow of her mother, she is known as a competent, hardworking, and devoted union official.

Narrative Account of the Interview

We went briefly into Ms. Foley's memories of her grandparents, her parents, her childhood in Canada, and subsequent moves to Boise, Idaho and San Francisco, California.

Ms. Foley's growing up in San Francisco and her relationship to her parents, and their influence on her, was discussed, as were her mother's and father's union activities. Concentration was on Ms. Metro and her organizing activities which resulted in the unionization of the hotel maids in San Francisco. (Ms. Foley has donated some of her mother's papers to the Library and they are available to Library patrons).

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We then went into Ms. Foley's marriage at the beginning of World War II, the birth of her three sons, her divorce, re-marriage, and the death of her second husband.

This is overlapped by her working as a hat check girl at dances (which were popular in those days, the era of the "Big Bands") to augment the family income.

In 1955 Phyllis Foley went to work in the office of Local #283 "for one day" as temporary help. She stayed on, gradually assuming more and more responsibilities, and finally becoming an appointed officer of the union.

It was during this period Ms. Foley met her third and present husband, a bellman, and the first member of the union she "dated."

The interview concludes with Ms. Foley's development as a union leader in her own right, her activities in behalf of Local #283, and her opinions on union policies, relations with employers, politics, and the women's movement.

Editing

Minor editing by transcriber. None by narrator.

Lucy Kendall

September 5, 1979

VOTE
"EXPERIENCE"



"HONESTY"
PHYLLIS FOLEY
FINANCIAL
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Dear Fellow Members:

My purpose for seeking re-election is to continue a tradition of honesty, integrity and responsibility for the assets of our union. A heavy burden is placed on me to protect the many years of hard fought union wealth. My experience to deal with this heavy responsibility comes from years of working on contracts for wages and fringe benefits; from years of administering and processing tremendous amounts

of correspondence, paying bills, protecting records, processing retired and death claims, maintaining the union's property. I have reduced the cost of: (1) building maintenance from over \$2,000/month to an average of \$200/month (2) cut staff expenses (3) cut computer costs (4) established low cost banking services (5) rented office space for a good profit (6) contributed to the merge of the local's \$475,000 in assets.

PHYLLIS FOLEY
FINANCIAL SECRETARY-TREASURER

For the future: Meals for all hotel workers, guaranteed tips for the maids, reduce the room assignment, and cost of living wage increases.

For the future: Remodel the downstairs area in the union hall for meetings and craft training.

For the future: I pledge my support to all those elected.

Thank you for your support and trust.

Fraternally yours,

Phyllis M. Foley



VOTE MAY 30 & 31
635 POLK STREET

Campaign literature of Phyllis Foley - Spring, 1979



MEAD
138 COLTON

STABLE
CONCRETE

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Women in California Collection

Interview with: Phyllis Foley, Interview 1
Date of Interview: Thursday, March 8, 1979
Interviewer: Lucy Kendall
Transcriber: Lucy Kendall

Begin Tape 1, Side 1

Ken: Today is Thursday, March 8, 1979, and we are starting an interview for the California Historical Society with Phyllis Foley, an official in the Culinary Workers Union.*

The first thing I need to know is the date of your birth.

Foley: September 18th, 1922.

Ken: In most families there is talk about how people were born. Was there any talk about the circumstances of your birth?

Foley: I know I was born in a hospital. There was not too much conversation in that regard.

Ken: Why were you named Phyllis?

Foley: Mother's favorite sister's name was Phyllis.

Ken: Did your mother and father ever talk about how they met?

Foley: They did, but I can't remember.

Ken: Were there any stories that were told about their courtship?

Foley: I believe that my dad proposed to my mother in the cemetery.

Ken: How did that come about?

Foley: In a small town, I think on Sundays that was the thing to do - to visit the cemetery. There were no shows or theatres in Ladysmith. Everyone, more or less, went to the cemetery for a walk on a summer's day.

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* Ms. Foley is an elected official, Secretary-Treasurer of Local #2, Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders' International Union, Affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

Ken: How well did you know your grandmother?

Foley: I had two grandmothers, and I knew them each very, very little. My father's mother was foreign. She was born in Austria, Hungary. We left Canada when I was probably around seven years old, and I had very little contact with my grandmothers.

Ken: What contact did you have with your uncle and his family? You had an Uncle Albert, I believe?

Foley: I don't remember an Uncle Albert at all. Maybe he was my mother's uncle. I don't know that he was every in Canada. She [Foley's mother] never mentioned him.

Ken: What special things in Canada did your family do together - you, your mother and your father?

Foley: I can't remember anything of those days. I can vaguely remember having a lot of people in the house and my mother doing a tremendous amount of cooking - entertaining.

Ken: What stories were told about your grandfather's death?

Foley: I had two grandfathers, and they were both killed. My father's father was ambushed. He was a foreman of a logging mill. My father was six weeks old when someone shot him through their kitchen window, and he was killed. My grandfather on my mother's side was drowned in a mine. They both met violent deaths.

Ken: What stories did you hear of your grandfather being drowned in the mines?

Foley: He went to the mine. Apparently there was a flood. He went in to rescue his men, and he himself was trapped in the mine. They did not get his body out for from three to four months.

That left my grandmother a widow. In those days I think the compensation for a widow was two hundred and fifty dollars to raise a family.

I don't think they had a house built

Foley: at that time, and the neighbors came in and built a house for my grandmother.

Ken: I read that there had been a long strike at that time and the men had just gone back to work.

Foley: That could be.

Ken: Of course you weren't even born then.

Foley: I know that my grandfather's name is on a placque in the Bastion at Nanaimo with the names of the other men who lost their lives there.

That's not unusual because I remember my mother telling me about some of her relatives in England who worked in the mines and lost their lives there. Backs broken - mining.

Ken: Your mother came from a mining family then?

Foley: Probably there were some relatives who had done mining. It was a big family. My grandfather, I think, had nine brothers.

Ken: Your grandfather on your mother's side wrote for a paper called the Courier in England run by the Blatchfords. Was there any talk about that in the family?

Foley: No.

Ken: What's the first thing you remember as a child?

Foley: The first thing I remember is our house and sitting on the lawn. My parents had a beautiful yard; grew their vegetables. I could play on one side of the lawn only - one side of the yard. That was my play area. I remember going to school a little bit, and I remember the snow. I can remember sitting in the kitchen on my mother's treadle sewing machine and making it go back and forth. I can remember those things.

Ken: What kind of a town was Ladysmith?

Foley: It was a mining town. That was the main industry. I remember meeting the miners. I remember a neighbor, apparently an elderly man, and I used to run down and meet him. I used to like him. I can remember looking at their faces, and their faces used to be

Foley: so black, and you could see the whites of their eyes. They would be carrying their lunch pails. He would give me a handful of cherries if I would carry his lunch pail. I thought that was great - getting a handful of cherries. My dad would always say, "Why don't you carry my lunch box." I said, "Because you don't give me any cherries."

Ken: Since your grandfather was drowned in the mines, did your mother ever object to your father being a miner?

Foley: Yes, she did. I can remember she didn't like that at all. It was very hard work. He went to work in the mines when he was twelve years old, and used to work waist deep in water. He had poor eyesight, and she blamed that on working in the mines. Just the working conditions because they had child labor in those days. I think we have pictures at home of the young boys coming out of the mines. They looked like they were seven or eight years old going in the mines to work. You could see the white faces and the black faces and their caps would be covered with coal dust. You got coal dust in cuts, and that was a stigma that you had on your hands for the rest of your life and never could wash away.

Ken: Do you remember why your family moved to the United States.

Foley: Apparently the mines closed down, and I think my dad was working for (I don't remember whether it was six dollars or twelve dollars twice a month, or what the salary was), but apparently everyone was not starving to death but near that. It was just bleak; and my father, being born in the United States and having a brother in this country, I think they probably just decided to come.

Ken: They had a depression in Canada then, but also in the United States.

Foley: I think it was a little bit worse there. It was a small town. They didn't have any money. I remember they bartered with one another. I can remember my mother saying you owed your soul to the company store, which they did there. The company owned some of the stores, and if you wanted a light globe you could be in debt to the company.

Ken: How would you describe your father?

Foley: My father was a very handsome blond man. He did a lot for his mother. Of all the sons (she had five sons) he was the one that took care of his mother and was most concerned about her. He would sacrifice himself for the family. He never wanted anything for himself. He was very good that way. Anything my mother wanted to do in the world - he was for that one hundred percent. He thought my mother was utter perfection.

Ken: How would you describe your mother then?

Foley: My mother - he depended on her for advice. She made all the decisions, and he depended on her for everything, so she was the leader in the family. She always was [a leader.] I think her brothers and sisters depended upon her. She was one that got out. She had the ideas. She had the initiative. I think she was the one that encouraged my father to leave [Canada].

Ken: Who would you say was the most intelligent?

Foley: My mother. If my father wasn't it was just because of working as such a young boy in the mines. He never had the opportunity; and his eyesight being poor.

Ken: How did you feel about leaving Ladysmith and moving to a strange town?

Foley: It didn't bother me in any way because I don't think I realized at the time what was happening. It was an adventure. I didn't really know. I was too young.

Foley: I was too young to make a decision. The only thing I remember about Boise, Idaho was it was so hot. I can remember the heat.

Ken: Why did the family leave Boise to go to San Francisco?

Foley: We were living with my Uncle Mike then, and the house burned when we were out one evening. The house was [burned] to the ground. He was completely burned out. And he had been working on the railroad there, and the railroads closed. I guess this was depression time. So my uncle was out of a job. I don't know why they decided, but they decided to come to San Francisco together.

Ken: How did you live in San Francisco? What was your home like?

Foley: The first home that I can remember was my aunt and uncle's and their two children, their dog, my mother and father and myself. It was down on Lexington Street someplace. I can only remember two or three rooms. It was temporary. We lived with them several times. I would say that we lived very poorly. And that was all the family could afford.

Ken; You lived in flats or apartments?

Foley: Mostly flats. I don't recall. I think we lived in an apartment once. The main thing was what the rent was. We had a very limited income.

Ken: What did your father do for a living in San Francisco?

Foley: I think he had trouble finding work. Finally I imagine he ended up on the waterfront. I don't know why he went down there and found work, but it wasn't steady work.

Ken: Did he join a union?

Foley: I don't know if there was a union when we first came to San Francisco or not. I think that was probably the beginning of the Longshoremen's Union. Then, after they started their hiring hall, I think he had a plug. He was very happy. He

Foley: thought what Harry Bridges did for the longshoremen was great. He was an idol to my father because of the improvements that he made in the conditions for the longshoremen. **

Ken: Did your mother go to work in San Francisco?

Foley: Yes. I think she was the first one that was able to find work.

Ken: Where did she go to work?

Foley: I think the first hotel she went to work at was the Carleton Hotel. She worked as a maid. That's all I can remember. She worked days. I presume maybe she got one day off a week. I don't think she ever got home before six o'clock at night. It seemed like she was gone all the time.

Ken: Who took care of you?

Foley: I took care of myself. We lived with my Aunt for a while, but I just more or less took care of myself. I was seven, but I was able.

Ken: How did your mother and father show that they loved you?

Foley: My dad was not an affectionate person at all. My mother showed affection. I just worshipped my mother. I really thought she was tremendous. She was so understanding. I think just her conversations and the things that she did showed her love. She didn't go around hugging and kissing all the time, but it was her actions..

Ken: When your family was together, for instance at the dinner table, what did you talk about?

Foley: I think they talked of the problems of the day and their work. I don't think I paid too much attention to their conversations. I tried to eat dinner so I could go out to play with the children, I imagine.

Ken: What kind of friends did your family have?

** The "plug Board" was used as the method of dispatching men out of the longshore hiring hall on an equal basis.

Foley: The friends that they had were the people that came down from Canada, and my father's two brothers. It was more or less their old friends and their relatives.

Ken: Was there a Canadian colony in San Francisco?

Foley: Well there were the ones that came from the small town that they lived in. There were two families, maybe three, and that was all.

Ken: Did friends come over to the house? What kind of a social life did you have?

Foley: They didn't have too much of a social life because any time that they had off they wanted to spend it with me or entertain me. I had my choice. I think once a week it was either go to the park or the zoo, to the beach, or to a movie. They devoted that one day to me - what I wanted.

Ken: During the period when you were quite young, prohibition existed. Did they ever talk about prohibition?

Foley: No because they didn't drink. My father didn't drink at all. He neither smoked or drank. Neither did my mother. We never thought anything of it. We never had it so -

Ken: There were all sorts of things going on then. There were hunger marches, marches on Washington, Unemployed Councils; all the things that went on during the depression. What do you remember about that?

Foley: Yes, I remember my father got involved. We used to look for all the union things and union stores, and only buy [from them]. My dad was very pro union and labor. I guess from being downtrodden for so many years in his work he was an advocate of labor. And he got me interested in it, and its trials and tribulations.

Ken: Did your mother and father ever disagree?

Foley: I imagine they did occasionally, but I don't remember.

Ken: Then you probably don't remember how they solved those disagreements?

Foley: My mother, I would say, was always the victor.

Ken: What religion were you brought up in?

Foley: When we first came to San Francisco I went to a Presbyterian church. And if I had girl friends that were Catholic, I went to the Catholic church. I went to the Norwegian Church. I had a liberal education in all the religions. My folks never objected to me going to church. They never did go to church in San Francisco. I don't recall them ever going to church. They insisted that I go in a way, but it was my own idea because of my girl friends. They went so I went to be with them.

Ken: What influence did religion have on your young life?

Foley: I don't know if it had any value at all. I just enjoyed it, and I just accepted the teachings. I think you find out in later life what the value of your religion is.

Ken: What about your parents. What did they teach you about truth, honesty. What values did they instill in you?

Foley: They never discussed it at all. It was just their way of how they acted and were that I just developed that way also. We never discussed honesty because they were such honest people themselves. We were very close to one another, just being the three of us. And since we had very little we appreciated what we did have. And it was very little. I remember the first year we were in San Francisco my mother bought a Christmas tree and we didn't even have money to buy an ornament for the tree so she put little tiny pieces of cotton on the tree. And I remember some of my friends coming in and laughing at that Christmas tree that didn't have an ornament on. I thought it was beautiful because it reminded

Foley

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Foley: me of the snow in Canada - the snowflakes.

Ken: Why were you an only child?

Foley: Not that they didn't want children. I just presume that was the way it was to be.

Ken: What advantages would you say you had because you were an only child?

Foley: I wouldn't say I had advantages. I would say I had disadvantages, not having anyone and being alone so much, and left alone. At that time I resented it. Right now I can be by myself and I'm not lonely. I can adjust to anything, and I enjoy being by myself because I had to do this when I was young. Many times in the area we lived, there were no children to play with so I had to amuse myself and find my own things to do to occupy my time, hobbies or whatever.

Ken: Were you ever forbidden to do anything?

Foley: I imagine I was. If I asked for something, I would always ask my mother. If she said "no" I never argued. I just accepted her decision.

Ken: Did you ever do anything your parents didn't feel was quite right?

Foley: I imagine I probably did. Probably I wasn't the best scholar, and I probably didn't study my piano the way I should; and they probably expected more of me than I did.

Ken: Did your mother play the piano?

Foley: Yes, she did.

Ken: Did you want to play the piano.

Foley: She insisted. I can remember when I was young I always wanted to take dancing lessons. She didn't approve of dancing lessons. I don't know why, and I didn't ask. She said "no" and that was it, so I didn't argue the point.

Ken: Were you responsible for any chores at home?

Foley: No. She didn't want me to do any of those things. I tried to help her. She would let me have little tasks to do. She did the dishes. I could dry them. She never insisted. If I had my studies to do, they came first before anything.

Foley: If I had studies I never had to do anything.

Ken: Was she a good cook?

Foley: An excellent cook

Ken: Did she try to teach you how to cook, or sew?

Foley: She would let me help, but she did it all. She never insisted that I do anything, but I learned. I liked that. She could manage. She was just so coordinated in what she wanted to do. When dad wasn't working he always had vegetables peeled and things ready for dinner too.

Ken: What did your father think of women working, generally?

Foley: I don't think he disapproved in any way. I really don't know how he felt about it. He didn't discuss it. I think he thought they should have some work experience.

Ken: Your mother worked because she wanted to or because she had to?

Foley: Because she had to. She was supporting us on what, I think, was three dollars and twenty five cents a day.

Ken: How did you feel about your mother working?

Foley: I didn't like it at all because I felt neglected at times. I felt all the other girls had a mother at home. At times I felt very, very lonely, yet at times I was very, very proud of her. So it was kind of a mixed emotion. I had a lot of freedom. I liked that. But I always wanted to be home to greet her when she got home. I would stand at the bus stop and wait for her so I could walk home with her and be with her and have a little bit more time with her.

Ken: What schools did you go to?

Foley: I went to Edison School and James Lick Junior High School and City College.

Ken: In school, what was your favorite subject?

Foley: I didn't truly have any favorite. I liked them all.

Ken: Were there any books around your house? Did your mother read a lot?

Foley: Oh, yes we had books. Most of the time that I remember she would work. She had all of her work to do, but she would read. She would bring magazines home from the hotel.

I didn't have any toys or much in the way of belongings so I spent a great deal of time at the library. My only recreation was to go to the library and get books. I always had books. I would read books at night. They would turn out the lights, and I would hide under the covers and read a book.

Ken: What were your favorite books?

Foley: I liked them all. I decided one summer while I was by myself I was going to read all the books in the childrens' section of the library, and I started out from the first book. But I didn't get all the books read. We were allowed four at a time, and I remember getting the four out, taking them home for a few days, returning them, and getting four more, but I never could read all the books in the childrens' section of the library.

Ken: An ambitious undertaking, anyway. What dreams did you have of the future. I mean young girls dream of marriage and jobs and children?

Foley: I thought I was going to get married and have a beautiful home, and cook. I loved to cook, and I loved to clean, and I just thought everything was going to be beautiful.

Ken: What plans did your parents have for you?

Foley: They wanted me to have a good education. That was their goal.

Ken: What kind of a student were you?

Foley: I think I got good marks. Then it was average.

Second side of tape

Foley: Teachers used to report "Phyllis talks too much." Then the second report would be "Phyllis talks entirely too much." My mother would ask me, "Why are you always getting those remarks on your report card?" I said, "Everybody else talks, but they always catch me. I don't talk any more than any of the others." So I always thought report cards were most unfair.

Ken: Who was your best girl friend in school.

Foley: Gladys Donohue, a red-headed Irish girl.

Ken: What did you girls do together?

Foley: Mostly we went for walks. We had no money for anything in those days, so it was mostly taking walks down Mission Street and back again. Or sit around in the room and talk, or sit on the front stairs and talk.

Ken: What did you talk about?

Foley: Everything imaginable: movies, in those days, and movie stars, I imagine. Probably clothes because we didn't have any.

Ken: Can you describe yourself as a child?

Foley: Not really. I couldn't describe myself at all. I just was a blond girl, average size and I guess just like any other child.

Ken: By the way, when you were a teen ager, how did your mother prepare you for womanhood?

Foley: No she never did. When I came around I^{*} was in the hospital. I had my appendix out, and one of the nuns brought me a book. She [my mother] never discussed those things with me. I don't think any of my girl friends' mothers ever did. We discussed it among ourselves but the mothers of that generation never did.

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* Had menstrual period.

Foley

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Ken:

(Discussed myths about menstruation)

Did your girls friends ever tell stories about this?

Foley:

Most of my girl friends at that time were Norwegian. The one that I mentioned - her father was Irish, but she was Norwegian also. Their mothers were from the old country. In fact they spoke with accents. Their mothers were very straight laced and very puritan types.

Ken:

So the nun gave you a book, and that's how you learned?

Foley:

In the hospital. Yes.

Ken:

Did your mother ever discuss with you the possibilities of marriage or the kind of man you should look for?

Foley:

No, she never did. I always wanted her approval of the boys I brought home. I would always ask both my parents - did they like them? No matter who I met, I felt they should like them too. If I liked them, then they should like them.

Ken:

When you were in your early teens the San Francisco General Strike took place and your father was active in that strike*. What do you remember about that period?

Foley:

The thing that I remember about that period was a dislike for the police; how the pickets were harrassed; the two men being shot-killed. My father taking me to their funeral and me seeing those men laying there in their caskets. To me, as I remember, they looked like wooden boxes. I believe it was at the union hall. It looked like a hall. I remember how subdued and shocked everyone was.

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* In the ephemera donated by Ms. Foley are several strike cards of her father's, all of which were stamped for picket duty every day.

Foley

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Ken: Did you participate in the funeral march?

Foley: I don't recall going in the funeral march. Maybe my father did. I don't remember.

Ken: There was a hotel strike in 1934 too. Do you remember anything about that? It was a very brief strike. Was your mother involved?

Foley: I can't remember if she was or not. She could have been a part of it, but I don't remember.

Ken: There was a Longshore Auxiliary started during the strike. Was your mother in that?

Foley: No. She never became involved in that. Not that I know of.

Ken: But your father did picket duty?

Foley: He always did picket duty. He did his and was always available when he had any free time. He was an avid picket.

Ken: Do you remember any stories he told about the strike?

Foley: I don't remember any stories.

Ken: What about politics. Upton Sinclair ran on the End Poverty in California, the EPIC movement, for Governor. How did your mother and father feel about Upton Sinclair?

Foley: I don't think that they agreed with him at that time because I think that they felt that was an impossible dream.

Ken: What about the Tom Mooney case?

Foley: I knew Mrs. Mooney. She lived right across the street from us on Clipper Street.

Ken: His wife?

Foley: His mother. I don't know how old I was. Maybe eight years old. The neighbors talked about the bombing and this and that. Mrs. Mooney called me over ~~one~~ day and asked me to thread a needle. And I went over and threaded the needle for her because her eyes were so poor. She gave me a dime. To me, not having anything, I thought, Oh, I have a dime! Imagine getting a dime for threading a needle! I didn't want to take it

Foley: from her, but she insisted. And I remember a big black limousine coming up in front of the house. It was the Mayor from New York, I think it was Jimmy Walker visiting her. I remember looking out the curtains and seeing this big limousine.

Ken: Did your family ever talk about Tom Mooney?

Foley: As I remember they did. They couldn't believe that he had done that. He was just a victim.

Ken: What do you remember about your mother taking on the responsibility for organizing the maids in the hotels?

Foley: I remember helping her set up chairs in our house for having people there. But I didn't realize what she was doing at that time. I just thought it was a social gathering of some kind. I thought, well it was nice just to have people there. And I thought anything she attempted was a good thing. No matter what my mother did, I thought it was perfection.

Ken: Why do you think now, looking back, that she started this?

Foley: I think that her having to go out and work as hard as she did - I know how hard she worked. It made me feel so bad to see her hands in that condition. And she'd tell me how she had to get down on her hands and knees and scrub. I used to just suffer inside that my little mother had to do this type of work. I think it made me a little bitter that she would have to do that because I felt that what she had to do, with her ability, was actually beneath her. And I thought if she was trying to do something to help others that it would improve conditions not only for herself. I always visualized that she would always have to be doing this type of work; that anything she

Foley: could do to help would be such an improvement. Some days she would go to work and be sent home without any pay. She had counted on those few dollars for us for something we desperately needed. She would deny herself something so that I could have a new pair of shoes.

Ken: How did your father feel about that?

Foley: I think it hurt him a great deal, his pride, that we were in such a poor financial way. I think he did his utmost to improve his ability, but the times were just against us all.

I didn't feel too bad about what we didn't have because there were so many other people that didn't have anything. I can remember a lot of people were getting boxes of food. And I thought, well we don't have that. So we were more fortunate than they were. And if I had a big hole in my shoe, or something, there were lots of kids in school who had holes in the bottom of their shoes too. So I never felt anything was lacking because there were so many that didn't have as much as we had.

Ken: What did your father think about your mother organizing?

Foley: He was in back of her one hundred percent.

Ken: I was just guessing about what effect the longshore strike, and the longshoremen organizing, had on your mother.

Foley: I'm sure that they discussed this together. I can remember, but I was just not interested at that time, so I was reading my book or doing what I was interested in. I wasn't interested in that.

Ken: What change took place in the family when she started organizing? She was gone all day long when she was working. Then when she was organizing too, it must have made some change.

Foley:

Foley: It did. It meant she was away from the house more. Then I really resented it. One days I said to her "You're never home." She used to write notes. And she used to come home and fix my dinner and then she'd leave again for these meetings. And I said, "It's a wonder that I don't grow up to be a juvenile delinquent because you're never at home." And she said, "I have no worry in that regard."

But her forcing that much responsibility on me, I think I was more careful in my activities than if she were there because I didn't ever want to do anything that would displease her or giving her additional worries about what I did because I figured she was working hard enough and devoting herself to her activities. I didn't want to do anything wrong.

Ken: Who took care of the household when she was gone? You said she did the cooking, but what about the cleaning and the shopping, and the ironing and the washing?

Foley: She did that. When she had the time she would do all those things unless my dad was home and was able to do them. But she always managed to do all those things besides. She would stay up ironing and everything. I didn't have to do anything.

Ken: Did she ever tell you any stories about her organizing experiences?

Foley: I remember her telling about, I think it was the Beverly Plaza Hotel where she had to hide in a closet all night because they were looking for her with guns. She was fearless in her organizing and in what she tried to do.

Ken: When I was talking to her, she constantly referred to the importance her father and mother placed on her to do a good job and to do a job well. Do you think this had anything to do with her conscientious methods of organizing?

Foley: I don't know. I think her father was utmost in her life. I don't know if her mother was that great an influence. The stories she tells about her father, he was just like an image to her. He must have had a tremendous impact on her. And she always tried to do a very good job, no matter what she did.

Ken: When the hotel strike started, what do you remember about that?

Foley: I can remember they had a food kitchen. I think the union was down on Jones street at that time, and there was a lot of activity. That's about all I remember about the hotel strike.

Ken: She was gone a lot during the strike too, I guess.

Foley: Yes, she was. You see I got used to that. It didn't occur to me that she was gone so much because it was that way since I was seven years old, so I just accepted it, more or less. I didn't think too much of it.

Ken: Why did you go down to the soup kitchen. I think that's what they were called.

Foley: We went down there once. I don't know if my dad was helping out or she was helping out, or she went in there for something, but we only went in there once.

Ken: But you never saw a picket line or were down at the hotels?

Foley: I remember once (I don't remember how old I was) I was down there with her one night when she was picketing the St. Francis Hotel. I remember how cold it was in front of the hotel & that wind blowing down Powell Street. I do remember that.

Foley: She took me on the picket line. Apparently there was some reason why she did. She didn't want to leave me alone, or something like that. But I remember the picket line; and standing right on the corner of Geary, and her telling me to stand out of the wind.

Ken: I shouldn't ask you this because you have already told me the answer, but what did you think of unions at that time?

Foley: I can remember writing an article in junior high school about unions. And the teacher gave us paper, and then he went out of the room. That was the time that everybody decided to gossip and have a good time. So he came back in and then he gave us a quiz. I never read the article that he told us to read because we were all visiting with one another in the classroom. However I learned so much listening to my mother and father discuss unions that I got an A on my paper - the only one in the class. I'll never forget that. I never read the article and I got an A.

Ken: When the strike was settled do you know what your mother thought of the settlement, because there was a lot of confusion at the end of the strike, and a lot of bitterness. I wondered if your mother mentioned it.

Foley: She probably did, but I don't remember her comments on it.

Ken: I'll go on to something else. When Tom Mooney was freed there was a big parade up Market Street. Were you involved, or did your family participate?

Foley: I can remember it, but I don't know what we did about it. I know there was a parade, but I don't remember if we were in it or not.

Ken: How did your father get injured on the job?

Foley: Apparently during war time a big hook came down and hit him on the head.

Foley

Ken: How did this affect your family?

Foley: He never returned to work after that. He wouldn't put in for any compensation. He wouldn't do anything because it was wartime. My dad didn't want to cause anybody any trouble. He wouldn't go to a doctor. He wouldn't do anything.

Ken: How did your mother feel about that?

Foley: Well, she accepted it. She was busy with her work, and if that was his decision that was fine. My dad, if he didn't want to do anything he wouldn't do it. He was the nicest person in the world, but he would agree with you and then he wouldn't do it. He never argued, but he wouldn't do it.

Ken: Was your father an active union member?

Foley: He was supportive to his union. If there was picketing he would do his part.

Ken: How can you explain your mother being active in her union and your father not in his?

Foley: They had their own interests and diversions although he did help her in later years at our union. Whenever a mailing had to get out, they would work late at night. At Christmas parties for the children, he was there, or anything needed to be done he would try to do things. He was supportive to her in that way..

Ken: He never went back to work after he was hurt and your mother supported the family from then on?

Foley: Yes.

Ken: Did he help take care of the house and do things there?

Foley: Oh yes he did.

Ken: In other words, the roles were reversed. He was the housewife and she the wage earner?

Foley: Because of his health she didn't think he was well enough. He was getting lame. His feet were crippled and he had trouble walking and he had trouble seeing. His feet were all

Foley: crippled up from childhood. I imagine they didn't have the proper shoes.

Ken: And working waist deep in water in the mines wouldn't help either.

Foley: Yes, and in those days the children didn't get the care that they do today.

Ken: There was an attempted take over of your mother's local by a building trades union that was finally settled by an agreement between the two internationals. What do you remember?

Foley: I remember a little of the outcome now because I have been told; but I know there was a struggle, and how deeply she was affected and depressed by it all after her work in trying to build it up. She said that she went through so many things there, the raiding of the Building Service, and apparently there was a time that the gangsters tried to get in there and take the local over, which they did for a period of time.

Ken: You mean in addition to the Building Trades?

Foley: Yes.

Ken: What kind of gangsters?

Foley: I don't know who they were now, but there was an underground element that did for a while.

 If I can go a little further, the reason she got back into the labor movement, she always said, "When there is no money, it's a woman's job. When there's money, then the men want to take it." And she was very active and never expected any pay for her work. Many months she worked without any salary whatsoever. When she made a salary she would give, not half of it away, but it seemed at that time she could have gone to Europe twice with all the money she had given to the members over the years when they needed anything. So she really dedicated herself, and I don't think you would have gotten

Foley: anyone to work as she did, the long hours, for her wages even. Nobody would want a job with the responsibility she endured.

In later years I said, "not that I am looking forward to having anything to do with it [a full time officials's] job], but I am looking at it with this view. You make it very difficult, when you sacrifice yourself the way you do, for anyone else that's coming in, because no one else will do the sacrificing that you have done. So you are being unfair."

Ken: That's true, too.

Foley: It is. You can dedicate yourself, and it's just difficult for somebody else, even if they are a dedicated person, to step in some one else's shoes that does those things. It's almost like being a martyr in that respect.

Ken: How old were you when you started going out on dates?

Foley: I think I had one date when I was sixteen. Not really. I didn't date. I had my girlfriends and there wasn't a lot of dating with the group I was in. We had our girls club and we might have been a clique amongst ourselves because I can remember years later I met one of the boys and he said it was so hard to infiltrate our group of girls because we never wanted anybody else. We were so involved with one another and our activities that we weren't really interested in boys. We knew they were there, but we were more interested in our own group and our own things, and our hiking and our tennis. If they wanted to play tennis, fine, But most of them didn't, so we went off and played tennis.

Ken: What kind of a club was this?

Foley: We would meet every Friday night and make baloney sandwiches and drink root beer, and that was a big time for us on Friday nights.

Foley:

Ken: Did your mother and father approve of this club?

Foley: Oh, yes. Our dues were a nickel a meeting.

Ken: Why did you decide to go to college?

Foley: I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I never did decide on what I wanted. I liked everything. I never could make up my mind what I liked to make a decision. Everybody knew they were going into business or to do this or that; and I thought, Oh I really don't know what I want to do. I like everything. I want to learn how to do everything.

Ken: Was it ever discussed at home with your mother and father?

Foley: They wanted me to make a decision and I just couldn't do it. Sometimes I'd tell them what I wanted to satisfy them, but I really didn't know what I wanted. I couldn't picture my self in that next category of work.

I used to work for the teachers though. When I went to junior high school I worked for a teacher, and I used to go and do a little housework for her. Then when I went to high school I worked in the records department of the high school. I was always working, but I still didn't know what I wanted to do.

Ken: What did you take up in college?

Foley: Just a general college course - English, history, zoology, language, and still didn't know what I wanted to do.

Ken: What teacher did you admire most?

Foley: The one I can remember I admired most was one in Canada, and she was a nun. My mother said she used to take me to Vancouver with her. I was the only child in the school that wasn't really a Catholic, and I used to go after prayers. But this one nun took such a liking to me when I

Foley: was a little girl. I can always remember her. Sister Perpetua was her name. I started in kindergarten there and my mother took me out of school because she said I was so young. I knew all my A B C's and all my time tables and I would keep her awake half the night reciting time tables in my sleep. [She thought] I was going beyond my years by knowing that, being four years old and knowing your time tables.

Ken: Why did you leave college?

Foley: I just didn't care for what I was doing there and what I was learning. I just felt it was a dead end. Then my mother said, "Well, you'll just have to find something to do." And I decided to take a business course, which I did. I went to business school.

End of tape one

Interview with Phyllis Foley, Interview 2
Date of Interview: Thursday, April 5, San Francisco, Calif.
Interviewer: Lucy Kendall
Transcriber: Lucy Kendall

Begin Tape, Side 1

Ken: There were some questions that, when I was typing the last interview, I did think of and thought I should ask.

What kind of people did your father bring to the house when you were young?

Foley: I think it was mostly people from the waterfront - his friends, his cronies and fellow workers.

Ken: What about your mother. Who did she invite?

Foley: I think she kept such hours there were very few people she brought to the house because she was working night and day. Her friends and her activity was her work.

Ken: How did your father's friends treat you as the daughter of the house? Did you see much of them?

Foley: No, I think I was quiet and stayed in the background.

Ken: When your mother talked of her work, what did she say the problems were that the maids had on the job?

Foley: I think it was the extensive work loads and how they were treated and looked down on and demeaned in their occupation. She always tried to bring it up to a higher level and show them their work was very important and what it meant to the hotels.

Ken: How was hiring done at the hotels?

Foley: I think a lot of it depended, in those days, on your religious background. They hired on your religious background or if the housekeeper liked you personally, or if you did a tremendous amount of work. You really had to prove yourself in those days, especially during the depression times by doing two people's work.

Ken: What do you mean by religious background?

Foley: I remember my mother saying she went into one hotel, and I think they asked her her religion. They wanted to find out her religion. She was quite surprised when she was hired at that hotel because she wasn't a Catholic. At that time all the maids that were hired [at that hotel] were Irish Catholic. And my mother said she probably got hired because of her work. She always worked hard to prove she was a good worker and that her religion and ancestry were not important.

Ken: When did your mother start treating you as an adult?

Foley: I think she always treated me as an adult. I don't recall that she ever treated me differently. I never noticed any change in her treatment towards me. I think that's the reason I was left alone as much as I was. She did trust me.

Ken: How did you feel about your mother being a union official?

Foley: I was very proud of her. At first I didn't know what it all entailed. At one time I didn't like it at all - not because of her work but because of what it took away from me personally. My girl friends had their mothers and I didn't seem to have a mother available. I was secretly very, very proud of her and it was a two pronged feeling.

Ken: What problems did you bring to her?

Foley: I don't think I brought her any problems. She was so busy and seemed to have so many problems of her own; and I don't think I had that many problems in my growing up time.

Ken: Did her being away from home so much bring you closer to your father?

Foley: I don't think so. I was always very close to my mother.

Ken: If your mother was the main support of the family, how did you live during the 1937 and 1941 strikes?

Foley: We lived in, I would say, very economical

Foley: and very cheap lodgings although they were very nice, and I didn't seem to mind. We always seemed to get along, and my mother fixed them up nicely. We were comfortable and there was always food. I didn't notice. I always felt we had just as much as anyone else during the depression times.

I knew that a lot of people had a lot better than I had, and I knew a lot of people had a lot worse than I had, so I could recognize the difference.

Ken: You mentioned you worked during high school doing housework. Your mother never let you do any housework at home, so how did she feel about your doing housework for other people?

Foley: She didn't mind it. She didn't care. She made no comment.

Ken: What did you do with your money?

Foley: I can't recall. I probably just used it for spending money. I don't think I received that much, probably something like twenty-five cents an hour.

Ken: Did you have what they called an allowance?

Foley: No. I would have liked to have one, but my mother always said, "If you want something just let me know. You don't need an allowance."

Ken: Now we'll get back to the chronology of the interview. How long did you go to business school?

Foley: It was during war time and I don't remember. It could have been six months, or eight months. I don't recall.

Ken: What was your first job?

Foley: I was going to business school and my cousin who was working in an office called me up. Apparently they were very short of office help. She called me up and asked if I would come down and go to work in their office, and this is how I received my first job.

Ken: For who?

Foley: For Butler Brothers. It was a wholesale warehouse.

Ken: What did you do there?

Foley: I did general accounts and kept track of all the warehousemen. I worked in the hardware department.

Ken: The I.L.W.U. Local 6 had that place organized. Were you friendly with the warehousemen there?

Foley: Yes.

Ken: Did you feel an attachment to them because your father was a member of the I.L.W.U.?

Foley: No. No unionism was ever discussed there. I was very young at that time.

Ken: Did your financial independence change your home relationship at all?

Foley: No.

Ken: You stayed home then. Did you give any money to your family for board and room?

Foley: I offered it to my mother and dad. They didn't want it. My dad took a dollar and I think he kept that same dollar in his wallet until the day he died. It was the first dollar from my first job.

Ken: How did it change your attitude, getting a regular income.

Foley: I liked it very well - a young girl with money. She could buy clothes and have some fun and more or less be independent.

Ken: What did you do with your money?

Foley: I bought clothes with it. That was the big thing.

Ken: How did you and your family feel about Pearl Harbor?

Foley: My mother was on strike and I was going to business school at that time and I heard it on the radio. I went upstairs (my mother was sleeping because she had been on the Picket line at the Mark Hopkins hotel all night) and I told her, "Mom, the Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor." She wasn't even interested in it because her main dedication was towards that picket line. So I just dashed downstairs again and resumed listening to the details on the radio.

Ken: What did your family think about Japanese internment?

Foley: I don't know what they thought about it. I think the concensus of opinion at that time was that it was for the best. No one complained about it. It seemed we were all in a very frightened way, and at that time everyone seemed to be in favor of the internment of the Japanese. I know I did at that time. I was young, and learned differently over the years. Things were different than they are today.

Ken: How did you meet your husband?

Foley: I met my first husband at an Eastern Star dance at the Hospitality House on Grove Street.

Ken: What were you doing at an Eastern Star dance?

Foley: In those days the Eastern Star would invite young girls to come to the dances they were holding for servicemen from all over the country to build up their morale.

Ken: Can you describe your first husband?

Foley: He was a very nice, very handsome man, very well educated. I was impressed with his manners and his background.

Ken: What qualities did he have that you admired most in him?

Foley: Well, everything about him - his looks, his education, his mannerisms. He was very well educated and possessed all the qualites that would attract a young girl and he was very solicitous towards me and was a perfect gentleman. He came from Wisconsin.

Ken: How did he court you?

Foley: After the dance he phoned me. We went on dates. He would bring me flowers. We went for walks. He was stationed in San Francisco at the Federal Building.

Ken: How did he propose marriage to you?

Foley: I really can't remember. I don't remember at all. I can remember how my last husband proposed to me.

Foley: He took me out to lunch and we went out to Fosters and had breakfast together and he proposed to me.

Ken: Did your mother give you a mother-daughter talk before marriage?

Foley: No. My mother was always so busy I presume she felt I was able to take care of myself.

Ken: Well, were you prepared for marriage when you went into marriage?

Foley: I think I was. I was young. It was wartime. Everything was so exciting in those days.

Ken: It's funny how we were more or less prepared although we didn't know much about it. Nature just took over.

Foley: I think it was the same problem with the young man. Who would tell him or advise him. So we both stepped into it at the same time and on an equal footing.

Ken: Describe your wedding.

Foley: I was the typical bride with the long beautiful white satin dress and the bridesmaids and the reception. I had a beautiful church wedding.

Ken: Who planned the wedding?

Foley: My mother and a bridal consultant and myself.

Ken: What did your family think of your husband?

Foley: They liked him. They thought he was very nice. Anything to please me. I think they were happy I decided to marry someone. I was very popular. My dad once said to me, "Is there anyone in the army or navy you don't know?" I was always bringing somebody home for dinner during that time. And the young men at that time, no matter where they were from, seemed to enjoy coming to a home and having a nice home cooked dinner.

Ken: Who cooked dinner?

Foley: My mother came home, and she set it up in the dining room with nice silver and china. We put it on. My mother, I think, thought it was good for everyone's morale, hers and for the young men who came to the house. She liked them all. I didn't always have one. I might have two or three at the same time.

Ken: What was your first home like?

Foley: At that time we had a three room apartment. We had a nice apartment during the wartime. We were very fortunate.

Ken: He was here during the war?

Foley: Oh yes. He was stationed right here. He had banking background. He came in from a bank so he had a very good background. He was quite a brilliant young man.

Ken: Were you both of the same religion.

Foley: Yes. More or less the same background.

Ken: Were you both interested in the same things?

Foley: I think the main thing we were both concerned about at that time was that the war would be over and we could have a normal life.

Ken: You continued working?

Foley: No. I didn't because soon after that I became pregnant and had my first son.

Ken: I was going to ask if you had participated in any union activities with your mother at that time.

Foley: No, I don't believe I did. She never encouraged me in that area at all.

Ken: Did she ever mention the fact that there was a C.I.O. Union in the hotels during that period?

Foley: Oh, yes she did. She mentioned that they had tried to get her to change affiliation. If I remember correctly the CIO and AFL were at odds at one time. She isn't the type that changes. If she has a conviction of what she believes is right she won't change. She has integrity in sticking with her beliefs. I think my dad tried to influence her into coming into the C.I.O. He felt that the C.I.O. could do more for the workers. But she stayed with the A.F.L.

Ken: I wondered how that affected your family.

Foley: At that time I think my dad really, really tried. I think he was very unhappy that she didn't change. But whatever her reasons were I don't know.

Foley: I wasn't interested in finding out. But I know of her now and she is intensely loyal.

Ken: She probably would have been loyal to Hugo Ernst too. Did you ever meet him?

Foley: No, I heard about him. There are several people in the labor movement that she idolized and thought a great deal of. One was Hugo Ernst*and the other C.T. McDonough*. Others were John O'Connell and Jack Goldberger from the Central Labor Council. They were a strong influence. She was very loyal to certain people.

Ken: What about the women in the labor movement? There was Jennie Matyas and Carmen Lucia.

Foley: I only remember her mentioning Jennie Matyas. I don't recall any other women she mentioned.

Ken: Did you and your family have any particular ties with Britain during the war. I mean your family did come from England. British War Relief -

Foley: No, I don't think so. She was loyal and interested in what happened and interested in the bombings. But she had a true dedication to her home. This [the United States] was our home and this is where our loyalties lay.

Ken: What kind of war work did you do?

Foley: I took care of two babies.

Ken: How did you and your husband decide to have children?

Foley: We never talked about it. All of a sudden there they were. He wanted a family at that time.

Ken: Who determined how you brought up your children?

Foley: Between my husband and myself? He did at first, but I disagreed with his harshness in raising them. As I grew older I could see that his influence was not the proper influence. It was too harsh.

Ken: When you disagreed, how did you solve your disagreements?

*

* Hugo Ernst and C.T. McDonough were both leaders in the San Francisco culinary unions who became International Officers of the Hotel & Restaurant Employees and Bartenders Int'l.

Foley: We had very few quarrels in our married life. The treatment of the boys finally lead to divorce. I didn't approve of them being beaten.

Ken: What values did you think it important for your children to have?

Foley: A lot of love and attention and discipline, but not harsh discipline. Of course I never was around children, being an only child, so it was difficult for me to raise boys. But I did. I finally ended up raising three myself.

Ken: What kind of a grandmother was Bertha Metro?

Foley: She spoiled them ummercifully. She was wonderful. She just loved them. I don't think there were three boys that had more attention than they did. She was just marvelous. My mother and dad, they just idolized them.

Ken: How much time was she able to spend with them?

Foley: Weekends she wanted them with her and any other time when they could stay overnight she wanted them there. My dad was not well so they were great company for him. He loved to play with them - take them to the park. He spent a great deal of time with them.

Ken: When your mother became Secretary-Treasurer of Local #283 [September 13, 1945] did you know about that, and how did you feel?

Foley: Definitely. At that time she made several remarks. It was a result of her hard work, and I think people recognized her honesty. She felt at one time, too, that she worked at times without drawing any salary. She always said, well, when there's no money available and it's hard work it's a woman's job. And if it ever comes to the point where there's money, then a man wants to take over.

The maids, who were the heart of our organization, trusted her and realized her true dedication to them, and she proved it. Even to this day I have the maids coming in and asking for her where other people in the labor movement have not even been

Foley: mentioned. There isn't a day that goes by that someone doesn't ask about her, and yet she has been retired for five years. She worked until she was seventy-five years old.

Ken: Did she ever talk to you about her new responsibilities?

Foley: She didn't talk about them. It was very difficult for me to step into her shoes. At one time (I believe it was 1972) she was hit by a car. At that time she was in negotiations with the major hotels. I had to go in and meet with the major hotels. I was not prepared. She told me nothing of what was on her mind. I just stepped in and apparently I was able to slip into her tight shoes and take over.

Ken: When were you divorced?

Foley: In 1956.

Ken: How did you feel? I mean rejected or relieved, or what?

Foley: My main concern was for my boys and establishing a home and starting a career. I didn't know exactly what I was going to do. I had some clerical background and I had worked some nights as a cashier and hat check girl. At that time in the union two of the office girls were out ill and they were really short in the office. So I just went down to the union for one day to help out. One day developed into another day. Then another day went by. Then I think one of the girls decided not to come back.

My mother did not want me there. She felt it was wrong - that people would not like me and would criticize me for being her daughter. Or some people would like me because I was her daughter. Or others would consider it was strictly nepotism. It made it doubly hard on me. I recognized the fact. And she also said to me, "I've kept you back where others I have encouraged on. I know I've kept you back and I should not have done that."

Foley: We both recognized it was a very difficult thing. I didn't like to be included in any type of nepotism. I wanted to be judged for myself alone.

Ken: Of course. I want to get to more of this a little later on. Right now - what were your problems being a single parent?

Foley: The main thing I found out was as soon as I got divorced the insurance companies cancelled me out because I was divorced. I felt that was very discriminatory. I had many friends and they helped me over the rough times.

Then I met a young man and he loved the boys. He realized my predicament about not having a home. He wanted the boys to take care of. Soon after that I married for the second time. He bought me a nice home for the boys.

Ken: How did your parents react to the divorce?

Foley: They were stunned by it. But they also realized that he abused the children. They idolized the children and they couldn't see his abuse.

The father and I got along perfectly. It was his abuse of the children I couldn't tolerate, and their beatings.

Ken: Did he ever help you support the children?

Foley: I took him to court. It was an impossible situation. The youngest boy was not quite three years old. He has never seen Philip to this day and Philip is twenty-five years old.

The children were a threat to him, I think. Had we not had children and I could have devoted myself to him entirely there wouldn't have been this friction in this relationship.

Looking back on it also, he was a very jealous man. He was even jealous of my mother and her position. He felt that a woman should not attain the stature in society that she had. She was involved in the politics of the City. She was on the F.E.P.C. (Fair Employment Practices Commission;) she was on

Foley: the Grand Jury, and she was on the Governor's Industrial Safety Conference as the co-chairman for labor, and she was on the San Francisco Labor Council, so she had a busy life. And I think he resented that - that he wasn't able to attain what he wanted in his career and she was very successful. I think he felt she was a rival.

He said to me one time after we had had some problems, "I hope you're not going to be like your mother."

Second side of tape

Ken: When did you join the union?

Foley: I joined the union in 1946. My husband was in the navy at that time. Apparently there were dances and parties where they needed people from the union. My mother asked me if I would be interested in working and I was. I would always like to have a little extra spending money. That's how I started working in the union. I worked at nights which would not take me away from the children.

Ken: Oh, your second husband was in the navy?

Foley: No, this was during the war, and I started in 1946.

Ken: I'm getting mixed up. When did you marry your second husband?

Foley: I married him in 1959.

Ken: When you were a hat check girl, was there a problem getting women into the hotels then? Were they still working in war industries?

Foley: I didn't work in hotels. I worked in the Civic Auditorium and the Scottish Rite Auditorium.

Ken: Then you were out on call?

Foley: Yes. I just worked extra - maybe a Saturday night, a Friday night. I didn't work steady. We had jurisdiction over hat check girls. At that time there was the Firemen's Ball, the Policemen's ball, the Butchers Ball. There were a lot of activities

Foley: going on in the city.

Ken: What did the job of a hat check girl entail?

Foley: You checked hats and coats. If you did cashiering, or if there were charges I took checks.

Ken: Were your mother's worries justified? Did people make comments to you about being a hat check girl?

Foley: No they didn't. My jobs, at that time, would start at nine o'clock at night. At that time they were very short of women to do this type of work on call, or just one day a week or once a month or whenever the calls came in. We wanted all the jobs covered by union people. So I was also doing my part to see that the union was involved.

Ken: Did you meet other people in the union at that time?

Foley: I met other women I was working with.

Ken: It's sort of an isolated job. Was there more than one hat check girl?

Foley: Sometimes there could have been twenty, and sometimes you were the only person.

It was nice. It was like you were attending a party or a function. You were part of the group. You got to meet all kinds of people. I enjoyed it.

Ken: What were your wages then?

Foley: I can't remember the wage schedule.

Ken: Did you make tips?

Foley: Oh yes. I was quite proud of that. You might make fourteen dollars or you might make fifty cents.

Ken: What did it mean to bring your own checks?

Foley: If you were working a wedding party you would check the coats and hats. In those days the men wore hats. You would give them a check and you would keep one on the garment. You supplied them. You bought them yourself.

Ken: Did you get paid more for doing that?

Foley: One dollar more. If you cashiered you got one dollar seventy cents for cashiering.

Ken: What new friends did you make as a result of working?

Foley: Just the people I worked with. I was still involved with my boys and they were my main activity.

Ken: So you weren't in the hotels at all. You simply did this type of work from time to time?

Foley: Yes.

Ken: I was going to ask you some questions about hotels, but I'd better not. But I do have one. During the war there were combination jobs in hotels. Everybody doubled up. After the war, how did they get back to union conditions again?

Foley: Conditions broke down, but I think the business agents worked. My mother had a very good rapport with the hotels and she was able to adjust all the problems that came along. I think the employers recognized that everything was just temporary during war time and these things would have to be straightened out. I imagine if they had any difficulty, if she or the business agents couldn't resolve it, it would go to an adjustment board.

Ken: During the war, did women ever do bell work for instance?

Foley: Oh definitely.

Ken: Are there any women bell people now?

Foley: Yes there is at the Quality Inn. I'm not sure of any other facility, but there has been talk about it and I'm in favor of it. However, I feel that if a woman is going to do a job she must perform as well as a man. At this time the luggage is so very heavy. They have to lift so many heavy bags and push heavy carts over carpeted hallways. For instance at the Sheraton Palace Hotel which occupies a block I think it would be physically impossible for a woman to keep up with a man. And I believe that anyone that

Foley: is doing a job should do their job. No one should have special consideration - whether you are a woman or a man.

Ken: Yes. There are a lot of weak men who probably couldn't handle the job.

Foley: That is correct. You have to be very strong physically. If you are not careful you get hernia problems, back problems, leg problems. It's a hard physical job. I always felt bellmen's work was a cheap longshoremen's job. It is just likelifting heavy, heavy weights.

Ken: Let's get back to your remarriage now. How did you meet your second husband. I said we'd get back to this.

Foley: He was my girl friend's brother. When I was moving he came to help me and he and he continued to help me. We were married for nearly ten years when he unfortunately had a heart attack.

Ken: Did you have a child by him?

Foley: No. Philip was about three and a half years old when we got married. My three sons were by my first husband. We were divorced when Philip was about two years old. We were married fourteen or fifteen years before we got divorced.

Ken: Then you remarried for the third time.

Foley: Yes, I have since remarried.

Ken: How did you feel about having all boys and no girls?

Foley: I would have loved to have a little girl to dress up. I always pictured a darling little girl. I wasn't involved in a boys world. They were alien to me. But I am so glad I did have the boys. I wouldn't want them to be any different. I love all of them equally, and the youngest one I just adore because he is the youngest.

Ken: What did your parents think of your remarriage?

Foley: They were very happy for me.

Ken: Did you continue working?

Foley: It was always going to be temporary, but I had so much to do, so I just kept going. But I never did plan to work in my life.

Ken: You started to tell me how you went to work in the union office. Did your mother call you, or did one of the others call you?

Foley: My mother called me in. They were desperate and it was just to help out for the day. I could answer the phone or just do anything to help out. I don't know if there was just one person in the office then. It was a large organization. Most organizations are understaffed, so you find if you have two or three people out you can't really function. So I just went in to help while the girls were out - one or two of the office staff - until they came back?

Ken: And one didn't?

Foley: One or two, I can't recall at this time, just didn't return.

Ken: What jobs did you finally have as a result of working in the office?

Foley: I did everything in the office to learn. I guess I did the most menial things in the office that no one else wanted to do - the things that had been piled up and sloughed off that they hoped somebody else would do. I learned all the machines. Started with the international reports. I just did everything. It was great training. I more or less just stayed in the background.

Ken: How did the other people in the office treat you?

Foley: They were all very nice. Maybe they were nice because I was the boss's daughter, or whatever, but I tried to be nice and get along with everyone and do my work.

Ken: Was there any jealousy because of your relationship to your mother?

Foley: There could have been. I can remember things now which seem petty when I think of it. I used to complain to her that so and so is not doing their work. She said to me, "Don't worry about anyone else or what they don't do. Just do your work and then you will know you are doing your job." So I always felt I would not worry about what anyone else did. And I will always remember that remark. As long as I do my work I'm not worried about what anyone else does.

Ken: Who was in charge of the office?

Foley: She [Bertha Metro] was. She was the leader there.

Ken: She had no training in running an office.

Foley: No, she didn't, but she was fantastic. She could do everything. She couldn't type, but she had a way with words. She could write contracts where attorneys could call her to get her thinking and her clarification. She said "I may not be able to think, but I love words and you can manipulate words, use words."

Ken: In the office, when anybody is hired, that has nothing to do with the membership. Does the membership vote on who does the clerical work?

Foley: No. She had the right to hire and fire, and I am sure she brought it before the executive board.

The members of the executive board I had known all my life practically, from a child on. To a lot of these people, you see, I was always there. I was the little girl growing up. It was like a family. When I got married some of the union people attended my wedding. I was part of the family.

Ken: Your last wedding?

Foley: No. The first. So I was always part of this.

Foley: And I think they knew of me and my mother and it was just what should be.

Ken: Let's see now - your second husband was still alive when you went to work in the union?

Foley: Yes he was.

Ken: What did he think about your doing this?

Foley: He was a very union minded man. He was an operating engineer. He was brought up in the same neighborhood. He lived on Liberty Street, not too far away. When I ~~went into~~ high school he was just graduating from high school. So we had a lot in common. And he was so very good to the boys. That's what I thought the world of him for because he was so good to my sons - a fantastic father.

He died of a heart attack ~~at~~ forty six.

Ken: You had only been married a short time, then?

Foley: Yes. He was a very wonderful man.

Ken: How did you meet your third husband?

Foley: He was a union member. He came to San Francisco looking for work. He was brought in by one of the other bellmen. I sent him to the Sheraton Palace Hotel as a bellman. He was hired. He would always call and talk to me. I never fraternized with the union members at all. That was always a policy my mother and I followed. I didn't think it was good businesswise. He kept begging and begging and finally I said I would have lunch with him. That was how I got to know him. That was the first member I ever had dated.

Ken: Is he the one that proposed to you at Fosters?

Foley: Yes. Although I had been asked by many of the men members to have lunch or dinner I would never accept.

Ken: It isn't, I guess, a good idea to become socially friendly with people because then you get accused of giving them favors.

Foley: Then, also, I didn't want to have any gossip. I thought, in a union position, you are subject to such much gossip; and it doesn't put the union

Foley: in a good light, or you personally. I think your union work and your personal life should be separate. I know how that worked in my mother's life and I thought it falls into your personal life. But I didn't want it to be that way because I wanted to have my personal life different than my work life.

Ken: And how was it different?

Foley: It wasn't. (laughter) You have to have a very understanding husband or a very understanding wife if a person gets involved in the labor movement because you're away from home a lot. And if they are a jealous person they are going to feel jealous of the people that you get involved with, the men or the women. So you have to have a very understanding spouse.

Ken: For instance, if you are active in the union now and your present husband is a union member, would he stay in the background because you were an official?

Foley: He has stayed in the background. That's why I have retained my former husband's name. I told him at the time we got married, I said, "Management will use it against you!" However, they did and have. They will think you will get favors from the union, and it just isn't good.

Ken: It is hard on the spouse unless you are both full time officials, and then you are accused of nepotism.

Foley: It is very difficult. That's why I said I didn't agree that I should fraternize or get involved with any of the members. Some of them I thought a great deal of.

Ken: You started to tell me how your mother treated you differently than the others in the office; that she would push them forward and not you. Develop that.

Foley: Well, I think she didn't want to be accused of any favoritism in any way. I think this was her

Foley: main thrust. I can remember when I was nominated to go to a convention it wasn't her insistence or even her wanting me to go. It was the president of our union. And I was quite surprised at him nominating me because I had no aspirations to go on in the labor movement at all. I enjoyed it. To me it was just a temporary thing. As I said, I was only hired for one day. But I was thrilled that I drew a high vote - higher than anyone. I was just amazed at that. And it encouraged me.

Maybe her thoughts were to keep me there; that she would teach me all there was to know about the office. And, as the years went on, I worked with her in planning the strategy. And I think that was a very unique thing because there was no political thing on my part. There was no politicking or jealousy. This way we were able to devote all our time and our energy for the members.

We had no problems in our union. If a person came in, no matter what their problem was - personal or on the job, we could give it a great deal of time. Maybe, when cases [adjustment] were held, we didn't win for the members. But they recognized that we did everything we possibly could. We had no lawsuits. We had a very happy union. The members loved the union. We had Christmas parties. The open door policy existed there. There was no animosity. I knew the members (and she did) personally, on a first name basis.

Ken: How did your mother develop leadership in the Union?

Foley: We were always looking for leadership in the union, and young people. It was very difficult to find because ours, being a very low paid group of workers, young people didn't

Foley: stay. They went on to different things. In the tipping category, the bellmen, we had a lot of fine young men. The union did not appeal to them. They didn't want to get involved in the problems of the union. They could make more on the job. It was very difficult. I was always looking for a person that had that spark. Always, no matter who came in, a new member coming in - did they have that spark? to develop into a union person and a union officer? It's impossible to find a person with that spark. I don't think you find it in many people today. I can recognize it. I have a feeling about people. And I can see people that are hired here. I know that they don't have it. It's just a job. I don't know what the answer is. There is not the dedication. I think you have to sacrifice yourself.

Ken: You think it may be the times now?

Foley: No. There are several here I can recognize that have it. We have one young woman - just outstanding. She dedicates herself. She is just a worker. She lives and breaths it. She is just going to be tremendous in time if nothing happens to her in the meantime.

Ken: What role did you play in the union meetings?

Foley: No part. My mother was an outstanding speaker. Our meetings were more relaxed - not conducted by Roberts Rules of Order although they were followed. It was more or less that she gave her talk. She could speak about the old times and the new times - stories; and she had the membership in the palm of her hand. She was an outstanding speaker, and they applauded. There was no animosity or hatred.

Ken: Was there a steward system?

Foley: We had no steward system. In fact we felt it was unnecessary because the business agents would call in at noon. If anyone had a particular problem they would call the union and somebody

Foley: would be there immediately. We were right there. We didn't need it. We felt the steward system was effective if there was an outlying area. We gave our members service.

Ken: How were members encouraged to participate in union affairs?

Foley: To come to the meetings and get involved.

Ken: Did you ever have fines for non attendance?

Foley: No. My mother never believed in fining people. They should come because they wanted to. And she had good meetings. Of course, toward the end, they kind of dwindled down.*But she was such a good speaker members liked to come to the meetings.

Prior to the merge, and I was happy to see that when I took over office - the last meeting I had there was wall to wall people- people sitting on the podium. I couldn't have gotten another person in that union hall.

They did not want to merge. They wanted to stay the way they were. They were happy. I encouraged the members to vote for the merge, which they did one hundred percent, although they did not want to. I said, "It's just like moving in with your mother-in-law. You may not like it but you have to tolerate it. And I think in time it will develop and we'll have more strength. This way, when the other unions vote for a contract and we oppose it because it's not enough money for our low paid people, they are going to have

* Referring to fact that the six ^{par}separate unions in the Culinary Joint Board, because of national policy, merged into one local in San Francisco - Local #2. Although some unions did vote on the merge, it was a token vote because the International made the decision without consulting the locals.

Foley: to do something for our maids and our low paid people now." And this is why I encouraged the merge - because now the service workers would not be left out.

Ken: That sounds right.

Foley: This is right because if four unions vote against one you cannot, in a Joint Board situation, do anything but go along with them. Now I felt that something was going to have to be done for the maids, and I was happy in that area. So the members voted for the merge one hundred percent.

Ken: What were some of the job problems of the maids after the war?

Foley: I think the room quotas have always been a problem. They have always been high.

Ken: What about hanging the rooms? How many rooms were they allowed to hang?

Foley: You see at one time we had a quota, and my mother said it worked against the maids. If you have complete access to a room you can do a quota. A quota is like a factory system. But when guests put signs on doors "do not disturb", they don't want the room made up, the maid cannot get to the room. If she doesn't have the linen to make up the room, she cannot do the X amount of rooms. We always felt that you should do your work, seven hours of work, with no quota system. The housekeeper has to have some kind of a figure to go by. But to this day I'll never believe in a quota system - that you have to do X amount of rooms. If you are a housekeeper you know what is in a day's work - the accessibility to a room. And I am still against a quota system. It seems to be in the offing that this is what is going to be in the picture. But I don't think I could ever change my views on it.

Ken: Have there been quotas before?

Foley: Many many years ago there were quota systems, and, as my mother said, it worked against the maids.

Foley: If you didn't do a quota you were fired.
Establishing a quota - you have to do that
amount of rooms.

Ken: Were there specifically men's jobs and women's
jobs in hotels?

Foley: Yes, there were. We had bath men in hotels.
They would do the bathrooms to assist the maids.
Over the years this has been done away with. And
I think this increased the maids' work load these
days. I am the only one in this organization that
knows what things have been done in the past. And
apparently, in the last few years, many of the
things that we have fought against in the union, the
maids are [now] doing in the hotels. I haven't
been aware of the violations that have occurred,
but apparently over the last three or four years
since we have merged there are a lot of violations
in the major hotels - the work load and the
duties of the maids.

Ken: Who determined what was a man's job and what
was a woman's job in a hotel?

Foley: I think this was established many years ago.
Probably in [nineteen] thirty eight and thirty
nine when the union was getting together they had men
to do the vacuuming and what they considered the
heavy work. Maids did not move furniture. That
was considered a man's job.

Ken: The men got more pay?

Foley: This is correct. In fact we found, a few years
ago, that one major hotel was having men housemen
assist and work with the maids in the rooms, getting
a rush job in working on the floors, and the men
were getting a higher rate of pay than the women doing
the identical work.

Ken: What did you do about it?

Foley: We filed an adjustment board case.

Ken: Did you win it?

Foley: It was never heard by the former President.

End of tape two

Interview with Phyllis Foley, Interview #3
Date of Interview: Wednesday, July 25, 1979, San Francisco, Calif.
Interviewer: Lucy Kendall
Transcriber: Lucy Kendall

Begin Tape #3, side 1

Ken: Did you ever know that your mother's father, your grandfather, and your own father were members of the Socialist Party [at one time]?

Foley: No. It was never discussed at home.

Ken: I wondered how it affected your mother's activities.

Foley: I don't think it affected her in any way. She did a tremendous amount of reading. And it just broadened her views. She was always very liberal in her thinking. It just gave her a tremendous scope. I think it was very good that she had all this background.

Ken: How happen she was a member of the Eastern Star?

Foley: That I don't know. I joined the Eastern Star and right after that she did. I joined first, but mine was a different Lodge than hers. I think it was probably a friend of hers that asked her.

Ken: Why did you join?

Foley: My first husband was a Mason and he always wanted me to join.

Ken: Were you active in it?

Foley: No, I never was because my children were very small, and then I went to work. I never had the time and have never gotten involved. I felt I only had one job and that was the union.

Ken: I wondered because you met your first husband at an Eastern Star dance.

Foley: That's how he was there because he heard of an Eastern Star dance. I had just been invited by a friend.

Ken: Now, let's get down to you. What would you say changed you from being just an office worker to a dedicated union official?

Foley: Well, I don't think in my life that I really wanted to get involved with the union. As I mentioned once before I was looking for a person to take over

Foley: to do the job. That person never appeared.

I was always very reluctant to come in the union because I felt my mother being such a tremendous and active person I couldn't, I just didn't have the potential that she had. It just wasn't what I thought that I could do as well as she did. I had a complex that she was so superior and I could never fill her shoes in any way.

Then staying around her and noting other people and their abilities I thought that that was just probably in my own mind that I couldn't measure up to what should be. I was too critical of myself in other words.

Ken: What made you change?

Foley: I don't know. I think probably as time went on, or age, or the members had a great deal of confidence in me, and I just finally felt I was as qualified as anyone else.

Ken: How did the members have confidence in you. What made them have confidence in you?

Foley: They were appreciative of any help that I could give them, and I enjoyed helping them. They came to me with their personal problems as well as their union problems. Union work is almost like sales work in a way. You sell the union. You do everything to help a person. It's not only union problems they have trouble with. It's their own personal life.

Ken: What were some of the personal problems the maids had?

Foley: The physical work was so hard. I always wanted to get involved with the State and have a study made of what the problems were on the job. For instance the maids in their bending over constantly - to me it was harder work than the farm workers. The maids seem to have so many problems with their backs. And I wanted a study made through the State, if it possibly could be, when they had Safety Conference meetings. I thought there were a lot of hazards in their work also. Because of the detergents and the cleansers many of them developed special dermatitis problems. Also in their families they seemed to have personal problems. When they retired

Foley: they had problems also. They had problems with their health. We had to refer them on to the proper agencies and also to advise them of their benefits. They didn't seem to know what their benefits were or, when a problem did occur, how to handle it.

Ken: Did you set up any special committees?

Foley: There were no special committees. They just came in. They would telephone, or come to the window, or just come in and talk. They all had this personal rapport with either me or my mother. We were always there so they could come and go. If they had a problem on the job, if the job was too hard, I had a fairly good rapport with the employers at the hotels and motels. If a job was too hard for a maid in one particular hotel I tried to make contact with another hotel or motel and place them on another job so they wouldn't be unemployed and we wouldn't lose them in the industry; but to get them satisfied in another location because I felt they were still good workers but in certain hotels they weren't able to cope with the pressure.

Ken: How did you step up from being an office worker to being able to plan strategy and tactics; meet with the employers in negotiations, and handle job problems?

Foley: Well I think working with the members and talking to them, I could see what their problems were. Working with my mother it seems I was the only one, when it came to negotiations, that had any ideas on bettering working conditions from talking with individual workers to find out what their main problem was; and thinking what their problem was and how it could be written into the agreement to either be a monetary increase or alleviate the pressure of the job.

Ken: You became an elected official five years ago, or had you been elected prior to that?

Foley: I was elected in nineteen seventy four as the Secretary-Treasurer.

Ken: And before that you were -

Foley: The Assistant Secretary.

Ken: And what were you before being Assistant Secretary?

Foley: I was the Recording Secretary. That would be all the records.

Ken: Recording Secretary was an office job? Then you stepped up to Assistant Secretary which was an office in the union. How did your responsibilities change then?

Foley: Not too much. I just assumed a few more and still did all the other work besides. I just added work for myself. The organization was growing. The membership was increasing. I did all the records - the Medical Plan. I was a Trustee for the Health and Welfare even when I was Recording Secretary. So I knew all the background of every phase of the union work - everything.

Ken: When you were appointed Recording Secretary and then Assistant Secretary, was this done through the Executive Board with the membership agreeing to it?

Foley: Yes.

Ken: And this was done with other people too? In other words the elections just took place for business agents and the Secretary?

Foley: Our union was the only union in the last years that had only appointed business agents. The other unions all had elected business agents. We appointed ours. We had problems with them. When they were elected they wouldn't work, so we appointed our business agents.

Ken: Did you ever have to make compromises to achieve what you wanted in the union?

Foley: Definitely, Absolutely. In my position with my mother, I had to be in the background most of the time. As she said, she gave me no advantages whatsoever but pushed other people ahead because of that feeling of nepotism. We both felt that way.

Foley: She always said, "I pushed other people ahead when I should have given you the chance." But she thought what she was doing was right because she said, "People will like you for you. Other people will not like you because you are my daughter."

Ken: Did the employers ever try to buy you off or inhibit you in any way from doing your job?

Foley: I've heard stories of other people, but it never came into our organization. And that's what I really felt great about because when I went into negotiations in nineteen seventy five and sat down with the employers when we were negotiating a contract. And the first thing I said in my opening statement after listening to their opening statement was. "I don't owe you anything. I don't owe you a breakfast. I don't owe you a lunch. I don't owe you a dinner. I owe you nothing. " They were taken aback a little by that remark. But we didn't take anything from anyone. Not even a cup of coffee. We were never under any obligation. That was my philosophy. I don't know if others abided by it, but that was mine because I didn't want to be obligated in any way.

Ken: Since your union was predominantly women, how did you deal with the men? Was there a problem?

Foley: None whatsoever.

Ken: Did you have special meetings for special groups in the union?

Foley: We called them occasionally, craft meetings. And we also called for special craft meetings in the particular hotels. And there was never any problems between the males and the females.

Ken: What were some of the day to day problems in the hotels? Wait - Did you ever function as a business Agent?

Foley: No, I never did.

Foley: I did business agent work on the phone, but I didn't go out into the area.

Ken: How did you solve problems over the phone?

Foley: Whatever it was, we had so many crafts - the maids, the telephone operators, the bellmen - whatever the problem was, if the employer asked for information, or a member asked for information regarding their work, it was given to them.

Ken: What techniques did you learn from your mother in dealing with employers?

Foley: That's very hard to answer. I think just being around her was an education in itself. Just by listening to her. The way she could work out any type of problem was fantastic - really. The things she could do. She could deal with the membership. She could deal with the employers. Con isn't the right word. She was never rude. I never heard her use any profanity in her life. She was just a lady all the way, and I think this was how she was successful.

Ken: What techniques did you develop on your own then?

Foley: Whenever there was a problem in my later life I would think about it for a minute and say to myself "how would she handle it? What would her ideas be?" And I found out I could answer things that way. When things got to be really rough the last few years I just felt her strength. I've always felt it. And when I lost her I felt that that was the end of myself in the labor movement; that she was telling me to get out. I really felt that way.

Ken: Of all the six culinary unions, you were the only one with strictly a hotel membership.

Foley: We had hotels, motels and clubs.

Ken: How did this affect your relationship with other culinary unions? It was almost an industrial set up.

Foley: We felt that we always paid our per capita and we felt we were not well represented by the Joint Board. At one time I believe #283 boycotted the Joint Board.

Foley: When I was Vice-President of the Joint Board nothing was ever discussed that involved the service workers. It was always the restaurant and the culinary crafts and not the service workers. We were looked down upon by the others. I felt that.

Ken: It has been said that the Joint Board was accused - that the Bartenders and the Cooks were supposed to be the elite of the Joint Board and everybody else suffered. Was this so?

Foley: We felt that way. Yes. Very much so. But the Bartenders always supported us. My mother said in negotiations the bartenders were always supportive.

But you see many years ago the situation was you had the women officers in the Waitresses were also married to officers in the Bartenders Union, so they had this strong alliance.

Ken: Wasn't there a lot of that [intermarriage] in the Culinary - and maybe other unions too. I don't know.

Foley: I don't think so much any more. But at that time, yes. You know it's very hard in the labor movement not to get your spouse interested in the matter also. You have to have a very understanding husband or wife.

Ken: Was there any problem of trying to upgrade people like a maid wanting to become a waitress or a houseman wanted to become a bartender. How was upgrading handled?

Foley: At that time, I don't remember any upgrading. There was no way. You see at one time most of our membership was Black when I was very active. And there was no way that a Black woman could be upgraded to a waitress. It was even hard for a maid to be upgraded to a housekeeper. There was very little upgrading.

Ken: What changed the character of the maids?

Foley: Of course the law throughout the land, and the membership was changed around. It is not the Black predominantly in the service area .

Ken: Is it because Blacks have an opportunity now to go into other areas of work?

Foley: I think so because they aren't restricted into just wearing a uniform. They can go into management.

But I still feel women are the most discriminated against. You don't see any women in top management in the hotels. And I made this issue last time in negotiations that there wasn't even one woman in management in negotiations.

Ken: What did they say?

Foley: They were taken aback. And they brought one woman in from the Personnel Office. And I made an issue that if women get anywhere in the hotel they are usually in the personnel area and that's as far as they go. You don't find a woman manager or assistant manager in any of the major hotels in San Francisco. I don't know if there are in any other major cities, but I still feel that women are being discriminated against - even in the labor movement. In every phase of it I think women are discriminated against. That's my personal opinion.

Ken: Do you belong to the Coalition of Labor Union Women?

Foley: Yes. It's not active here. I think I attended one meeting back East, but it's not that active. You can get active in your own womens' group, and I think your strength is there. You go to a large meeting and everybody is feeling so strong. But you came back into your own particular area and you find how little - that you are not that strong.

Ken: What was the difference between the way the A.F.L. union officials treated you and the way the employers treated you?

Foley: I think it is more or less the same. They still look down on women. They don't think you have a brain; that you can function. There are no women sitting on the executive Boards of any of the big unions. Oh, there might be a few. But even in our international union there is only one woman that's now on the executive board.

Foley: And ours is a predominantly female organization, and I feel that we are still not represented properly.

Ken: What do you think can be done about it?

Foley: The women have to take a more aggressive stand. They still have the attitude that the male is the predominant leader in the world, I presume.

Ken: What were the advantages of being a women involved in negotiations? Or disadvantages?

Foley: I never gave it any thought. I was a part of it and it was just my job that I was doing. I watched the employers, how they worked, and what their thing was. And it was very interesting to see how their ego worked. It was very interesting to see the little acts they put on - the different employers in San Francisco and their egos.

Ken: Do you think you could interpret their reactions to a situation better than a man could interpret their reactions?

Foley: I think so. Yes. Because a woman is used to being around her husband and anticipating his needs and more or less what he is thinking. And you could just see what the male employers thoughts were too. The employers really have to show their superiority. And you play a little game with them where you get your point over, but you also let them see that they are not defeated in any way. You have to save their ego somewhat. You know, you play your little games.

Ken: What would you say would be the specific disadvantage or advantages of being a women in the leadership of a local?

Foley: One of the disadvantages is a lot of employers don't think a woman has the ability. They don't feel confidence that you know the law or have training in that area.

Ken: Does this give you an advantage because you do know the law and you do have the ability?

Foley: I think it does and I think it is more or less of a challenge to you to more or less prove that you can do these things. You work at it

I think a woman develops more if she is interested in doing her job and making a success. She works twice as hard as her male counterpart.

Ken: You said women in the local came to you with their problems. Did men ever come to you with their problems?

Foley: Yes. In our union and in our particular craft many of the men are single. I don't know why they are unless it's changed over the years.

Ken: They are boomers. They move a lot.

Foley: This is it, and they have their problems also.

Ken: They didn't hesitate to come to you because you were a woman?

Foley: No.

Ken: Were there any problems in the hotels between the different crafts at any time? Difficulties between the maids and the bellmen, or between the bellmen and the elevator operators, and so on?

Foley: Occasionally, but it was mostly personality clashes.

Ken: Then it wasn't a matter of class distinction?

Foley: No.

Ken: What things happened to you as a woman that wouldn't have happened had you been a man?

Foley: I would say probably if you were a male you would have gotten further in the organization, or be appointed to different assignments. I've never gotten myself involved in that area that somebody got this or somebody got that. I was content to do my job, and that was it. I only had one aim, one job, so I didn't look for anything else and I wasn't interested.

Ken: It's been said that women don't make as good union members as men do. What do you think about that?

Foley: I think they really do. With families they probably don't have the time to get involved.

Foley

Ken: How do you think things have changed for women who work for a living from the time you came into the hotels and today?

Foley: It's a different group of people, so it's hard to say. You have minorities here that don't know their rights, so this is the problem we are facing. The Black people [now] all know their rights. But you have the Filipino, the Chinese, the Asians.

Ken: In other words, it isn't the women who have changed, but the type of workers?

Foley: This is correct.

Ken: Now the hotels get people who don't know their rights. These are the kind of people who do this type of work? So they can be taken advantage of?

Foley: This is the way it's changed.

Ken: Is the problem telling people what their rights are?

Foley: In regard to the union, it hasn't done a job in that area. It failed.

Ken: What do you think of the Equal Rights Amendment?

Foley: I have done work on that. I still think there is so much discrimination, just for women alone, not for races. I told the Black maids, when they come to me about discrimination, "Yes, we have discrimination, the biggest discrimination in the world, because we are women." It will be that way for a long time.

Ken: Do you think the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment will change things?

Foley: It might, in time, if we live that long.

Ken: Do you feel today that organized labor is meeting the needs of people in the union?

Foley: Absolutely not because you can't find people dedicated to the labor movement. They don't understand what it is. They are not interested in the work involved. I don't know what the answer is, but I don't see it. I think the labor movement is going down rapidly.

Ken: How do you think you have changed since nineteen fifty five when you first came to work for the union?

Foley: I'm not even the same person. I've learned so much, gone through so much. I wouldn't take a million dollars for what I've gone through.

Ken: Do you think you would do it again?

Foley: I probably would, but I wouldn't have done the same things. I wouldn't have agreed to the merger. I would have fought that all the way.

Ken: How did you change personally?

Foley: That I couldn't say.

Ken: What new qualities did you add to your life?

Foley: I've learned that change is not going to happen overnight. It takes many, many years and you have to be patient. I think patience is the greatest thing I've learned.

Ken: Thank you very much.

NOTE: Tape was left on. What follows is partial transcript of desultory conversation:-

Ken: As you say, the change in membership is so great. What do you think of young people?

Foley: Well, there's a different element today than years ago. I've noticed the changes over the years. When I first came into our union we had Irish and German women. Then we had the Black women. Now, predominantly in the hotels, you have the Filipino women, and a sprinkling of Chinese. In the campaigning I did I was surprised that in all the kitchens there were mainly Chinese.

Ken: What about Spanish speaking?

Foley: They are few, but not predominantly.

Ken: What qualities does it take to make one want to become a union official, you have so much to content with.

Foley: Yes, you do.

Ken: I mean what qualities do you think people need to have to want to run for union office today compared to thirty years ago?

Foley: Years ago it usually meant a great deal of sacrifice on your part. But today apparently people don't think you have to sacrifice. I don't know.

Ken: I just wondered. In the thirties and even in the older days when there were Wobblies people got killed. They got murdered for being officials.

Foley: I remember my mother being chased around the hotels with a gun and hiding in the closet. Management chased her. Years ago people didn't have to belong to unions, but they wanted to for job protection.

I think they feel today that the employer protects them. The employers are competitive with the unions. Some employers give the people in our industry more than the union can -

Ken: Yes, but they probably wouldn't if there wasn't a union. The threat of a union is always hanging over their heads.

Foley: That's the thing. They are competitive. So they are actually, in a way, putting us out of business.

Ken: When we're out of business, then what happens?

Foley: That's the unknown quantity. I don't think we'll ever be out of business. I think we'll probably be down there fluttering a little bit, but I think in time, if things keep going the way they are going, our union will just be a hotel union. I think the restaurants are very precarious.

Ken: I want to get back to union officials. Now I know Joe Freitas, and whether he did anything or not, they are massacring that man. People will always say, "Where there is smoke there is fire." You put up with so much to be an official. What is it that makes you want to be one? What makes people want to run for office?

Foley: I don't know whether to run for office politically. I think it's the job you want to do. I don't like to run for office, and I think politics are so bad. People are always accused of things. I just think it's the job that you think you can do.

Ken: [Regarding a union shop and a closed shop] -

Let's put it this way. The contract says that the employer would first try to have a union member for a job that was open. If he couldn't find one that was satisfactory, then he would go to the street and the person hired would join the union. Now that's not a closed shop. That's a union shop.

Now we never had a closed shop. Why do you think we never had a closed shop? The strike in nineteen thirty seven was for a closed shop, and the strike in forty one was for a closed shop. There hasn't been a strike since, but we have had contract negotiations.

Foley: I don't know. The employers always that that we never provide them with any help. That they call the union and we don't provide them with competent help.

Ken: Was that true in your union? [Local #283]

Foley: There's always been a shortage of maids. Although we had quite a few maids we would send them out and the hotels and the motels would still call us; and for the telephone operators. We had a good dispatch system.

Ken: Actually I would think the employers would be happy to have a union dispatch system. It would save them a lot of trouble.

Foley: Absolutely it would, and it would be very beneficial to the union. I always thought it was very good because you supplied the employer with good competent help. It would build up the union and it helped us in negotiations because the employer felt more confident with us - that we were doing a job. I felt that anything we could do to help the industry - I believed in education; believed in upgrading the members, and it also helped the employer.

Ken: Were you a member of any City or County Commissions?

Foley: Twice I was on the Wage Board.

Foley

Ken:

What did you do on the Wage Board?

Foley:

On the working conditions. Housekeeping rules - heating - ventilation - rest periods.

Ken:

In the culinary especially there was great dependence on the State Labor Commissioner. Was this true in your union?

Foley:

No. We hardly ever used the Labor Commissioner. As I said - it is hard to believe, but we had a very good rapport with our membership. We - I knew all of our members, practically, personally. We all did. And once in a while they would bring in their wages where they felt there was a discrepancy, but it was very seldom that they ever went to a Labor Commissioner. If there was anything wrong with their paycheck the business agent usually went to the employer and it was straightened out then. Maybe two or three cases in all the years that I can remember. We never went to the Labor Commissioner.

Ken:

You did it as a last resort?

Foley:

Yes. We did our homework. Gave the members service. And I think this is the key in any labor organization - to give your members service. And they always wanted to have you there. And they always wanted to see you there. And they didn't like new faces. It makes them very uneasy when they see new faces. In the office staff, they like to see the same faces because it makes them feel confident. And anyone who is new - "Who is that person?" They want to know who they are, and all about them, and "Where is so-and-do?"

Ken:

In other words, it's sort of like a family. Did you have family parties?

Foley:

We certainly did. We didn't have picnics. We had a Christmas party for the children, and put it on that basis. We gave each child a gift and had music and food. We really had a lot of food. Worked hard. We had a lot of old retired people that lived alone in little hotel rooms. They would come down there, and we had the Christmas trees, and they enjoyed it very much.

Foley: I think that's the key to how you build up a union - individual attention. If you go back to giving them the individual attention the organization will go up again.

Ken: We were talking about the difference in unions twenty years ago and now. It seems to me there has been more dependence on the law and on the courts than there ever has been before. What do you think about that? When you first came in, was there that much dependence?

Foley: No, and there were no books written, and there were no labor courses. Now there are all these labor studies classes. I remember when I came into the union, I said, "Where can you find out about this?" And there were no books written. You learned, you learned. And this was scratch root. Somebody said, "How do you know these things?" Or, "Who told you this?" I learned it. I learned it. And I listened to people that were supposed to be experts on labor this and labor that, and it's very amusing to hear their discussion. (laughs)

Ken: They say experience is the best teacher.

Foley: Many years ago, when you think about how by-laws are written - even when we were discussing the trust agreement - years ago, what insight people had. So many things they wrote are the law today.

Ken: Why have unions become dependent upon State and Federal laws instead of their own strength?

Foley: I really don't think that they got their strength from these things. I think they had to conform to the laws. I think that the Federal and State had made these laws really to protect the employer against the unions building up such strength. And we would have to comply to what the law is.

Ken: But unions are constantly suing employers and employers are suing unions. And the National Labor Relations Board, they are making appeals to it, all the

Ken: time. Do you always have to use the National Labor Relations Board, for instance?

Foley: Well, usually the National Labor Relations Board is against the unions. I mean it is anti-union. I think many times when the members go to the National Labor Relations Board against the union is [because] they feel they are not being represented properly; that the union isn't doing anything for them; that they aren't hearing their cases. And many times they are right in what they are doing. They have to have someone sometimes to push the union to do something for them; if you have a business agent, or whoever it is, that's not doing their job.

You see this is the thing where the union has lacked, by not educating the members to come to the union; educating them on what the union does for them. If you do this, if you have that rapport with the members, they are going to come to you first. And this is why I said right from the beginning that the members do not know what their rights are. They haven't been educated [on what the union is]. To them, the union just takes their money. They don't know their union representative. They never come to a union meeting. They don't know their benefits. And we've lost that personal contact with the members.

Ken: You said check-off?

Foley: The dues are just taken out of their check, and they don't get any communication [from the union]. They get their international magazine, but they go to the personnel department. They are hired. The personnel department sends in their initiation fee, send in their monthly dues.

Ken: They never have any contact with the Union?

Foley: Never have any contact with the union.

Ken: Don't you initiate members?

Foley: No. You see, when you do that the member feels it's the employer that's getting him the medical plan, that's doing everything for him. And the union is

Foley: doing nothing but taking the money out of their check. All they see are the dues deductions. They don't know the benefits of the union. So if they have a problem they don't go to the union. They'll go up to the National Labor Relations Board or whatever, or drop out of the union without taking a withdrawal because they've never been told what they should do, or if there is a hiring hall. So we haven't been doing our job.

 There are so many areas we are just lacking in, and there is so much work that we can do.

End of tape.

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